

NSC BRIEFING

24 June 1959

KERALA

- I. Agitation begun two weeks ago by political opposition and religious groups to cause fall of Communist government in India's Kerala state continues.
  - A. Almost daily demonstrations, 5,000 persons arrested to date, 14 killed.
  - B. Students, labor unions, small socialist splinter parties and Moslem League have joined agitation.
- II. Indecisiveness in topmost ranks of Nehru's Congress party may weaken campaign, however,
  - A. Nehru, who originally approved plans for agitation only reluctantly, is concerned at Indian and international press criticism that agitation is undemocratic, and contrary to moral attitude adopted by Nehru and Congress party on other issues.
    1. Nehru perturbed by British press comment about wisdom of trying force Kerala government resignation by mass action, fear that use unconstitutional tactics to force new elections would render elections meaningless.
    2. Nehru probably most concerned, however, that Congress use of unconstitutional tactics in Kerala will make it difficult for New Delhi to counter Communist and rightist use of similar tactics in other key states such as Bombay,

Punjab, Madras.

III. Latest reports indicate Nehru likely to attempt compromise as result his conversations with Communist and opposition leaders during personal visit to Kerala 22-24 June.

A. Official view unlikely to be known before Nehru reports to cabinet on today and to top Congress party policy-making committee tomorrow.

IV. Meanwhile, Congress party and socialist leaders at state level have resolved to press fight to bitter end. Their public statements to this effect supported by [redacted]

A. Communist government of Kerala continues to stand firm, and riotous situation likely to continue.

B. Accordingly, still chance that New Delhi may eventually feel forced to step in and take over direct administration of state.

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~~SECRET~~  
Extracts from the Manchester Guardian Weekly, 18 June 1959

CPYRGHT  
...it may be perfectly justifiable for the Christians, Hindus, and Moslems of Kerala to keep their own schools closed in protest against the interference of the new Education Act. But to seek to overthrow a Government brought to power by a free election is a very different thing.

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CPYRGHT  
...to the Communists' contempt for "bourgeois" liberal democracy (whether or not expressed), the only effective answer is a virorous faith in it. And now the democratic parties in Kerala have shown that even in a republic with a central government pledged to maintain the rule of law they prefer a short cut to their immediate political ends. If they do manage to bring down the Kerala Government, they will in the long run have suffered a worse defeat than if they call off the campaign (as one can see Gandhi doing). For what they have done any party will be able to attempt if it is defeated at the polls; they have gone some way towards making elections a meaningless formality.